



*Painted by B. Fleetwood-Walker.*

**G**EORGE HENRY GARNER was born in the cabin of a canal boat — more popularly known as a barge — at Oldbury, near Birmingham, in 1893. At that time canal families lived entirely in their boats, and at the age of seven young George, perched on a packing-case to enable him to reach the tiller, started to learn how to steer a sixty-foot boat. At twelve years old he could work a boat through a canal lock without either damaging the boat or emptying the canal. The rest of his education consisted of odd days spent at school while the boat was either being loaded or discharged. By the time he was twenty he had

travelled every canal in the Midlands delivering cargoes of sulphuric acid or taking on coal. In 1914 he enlisted in the Worcestershire Regiment and served in France, Gallipoli and in North Russia. He returned to England in 1919 with the rank of sergeant, volunteered to remain in the Army and was sent to India. In 1922 he returned to the canals to run a "tank-boat" — that is one fitted with a tank to hold 20 tons of liquid instead of 30 tons of freight. These boats carry "gas-liquor" — a by-product of gas manufacture — from various gas-works to the chemical works where it is used for making ammonia. At present Mr. Garner is looking after canal horses at the chemical works near where he was born, and in "marshalling" boats — that is manhandling them from the canal itself to their berths, by means of a pole 18 feet long and weighing 14 lbs. As a boat is seven feet wide and sixty feet long and carries between twenty and thirty tons of cargo, the strength and skill required are considerable, but Mr. Garner considers this easier work than the long canal voyages he used to make. It is of interest that Britain's old-time inland waterways and the folk who live on them and by them still play an important part in transporting the raw materials and the products of the modern chemical industry.



**Ici.**

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